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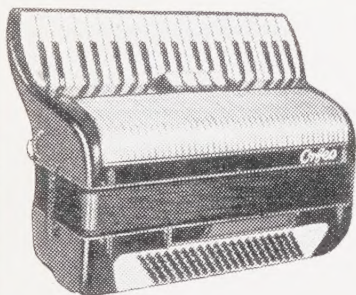
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The ROYAL DANISH BALLET FESTIVAL

By P. W. MANCHESTER

WHEN I left London on May 30th for my first visit to Copenhagen I knew no more about the Royal Danish Ballet than most other ballet lovers in this country who have never been to Denmark; that is to say I knew that it had a continuous tradition going back two hundred years, that it had a famous nineteenth century choreographer and ballet master some of whose ballets are still in the repertoire, and a great ballerina, Margot Lander, who retired only last year.

On June 1st I saw my first performance by the Royal Danish Ballet and before you could say 'August Bournonville' I had fallen in love with another company. Now it is my task to try and give a picture of this company to readers who have never seen it. If I can present this picture in such a way that it arouses a lively curiosity here in a Ballet which is, as yet, almost unknown outside its own country, I shall have done a very, very little to repay the overwhelming kindness and hospitality of my Danish hosts.

THE BEGINNING OF THE DANISH BALLET

First of all it is necessary to supply a background

against which the company as it exists today will be seen in better perspective.

The first Royal Theatre in Kongens Nytorv, the finest square in Copenhagen, dates back to 1748 and even at that date there was a small ballet company under a French ballet master, for dancing as an art can be traced back in Denmark to the sixteenth century. It was in 1775, however, that the foundations of Danish Ballet can really be said to have been laid with the appointment as ballet master of Vincenzo Galeotti, an Italian who had danced with Angiolini and Noverre. He was succeeded by Antoine Bournonville who in turn was succeeded by his son, the great August Bournonville whom he had trained at the Court Theatre where the ballet school was then housed. August Bournonville completed his training in Paris under Auguste Vestris and became a soloist at the Paris Opera. He returned to Copenhagen in 1829 and his fifty years as dancer, ballet master and choreographer established the character of the Royal Danish Ballet as it exists today. He left as his legacy not only a number of ballets which are still performed, but the French style which is preserved with far

ERIK BRUHN AND TONI LANDER IN "ETUDE"

Action photograph by Baron





Photograph by Baron

BORGE RALOV IN 'PETROUCHKA'

greater purity than anywhere else in the world, including Paris, though in Denmark it is always called 'the Bournonville system'. The characteristics of this style will be discussed in due course.

THE ROYAL THEATRE

The present theatre was built in 1874-76, and with more recent additions holds another smaller theatre, the ballet school, two fine rehearsal rooms and the administrative offices. The auditorium is considerably smaller than the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, holding only about fifteen hundred people so that it retains a warm, homely atmosphere though it is unmistakably a national opera house. The foyer has a row of magnificent chandeliers which are reflected *ad infinitum* in enormous mirrors at either end, and French windows open on to a large balcony overlooking the lovely square. The stage is somewhat narrower than that at Covent Garden but it is considerably deeper, which depth is used with great effect in several ballets. As will presently appear, stage effects are very much better contrived than anything we see here.

THE RESULTS OF A TRADITION

A company with its own school which can trace an unbroken lineage back over two hundred years will almost certainly have a character unlike that of



Photograph by Baron

MARGRETHE SCHANNE IN 'GISELLE', ACT I

any of the companies we have ever seen in England, including our own, none of which has yet had time to develop a 'tradition'. There is something about this company which only its long life can have brought about and which is possibly more easily seen by the foreigner than by the Danes, who love and respect their Ballet but do not see it in comparison with other companies.

There is a unity in the dancing and presentation which can only have come about because these dancers have been in this theatre all their lives. They enter the school at six or seven and long before they are old enough to join the company they have appeared in the many children's parts which the repertoire provides. Self-consciousness is accordingly unknown to them. Ducks are not more at home in water than these dancers on the stage of the Royal Theatre.

Then again, there is no idea that a dancer is no more use after about the age of forty. Some of the most loved members of the company are well on in years. As they grow older they assume the many parts which call for older artists, and as a consequence one sees nowhere else such performances of roles like Giselle's mother, the Prince of Courland, Dr. Coppélius and the Burgomaster (who is a far

more important character in the Danish *Coppélia* than he is in any other production I have seen), the Father, Mother and Manager in *Le Beau Danube*, Madge the Witch in *La Sylphide* and the many similar characters in their own ballets. Watching the artists who perform these roles was a lesson in mime which none of we English critics fortunate enough to be present will ever forget.

Another result of this use of the older artist is that ballets can be preserved with extraordinary faithfulness because there are always so many dancers available who remember the original productions and see to it that they are kept intact when new dancers take over roles. It is quite usual for former members of the company to watch rehearsals of a revival for this very purpose.

THE BOURNONVILLE SYSTEM

Now something about the actual style of dancing because this is in some respects so different from the Russian style which is now almost universal that it is essential to appreciate these differences before the ability of the dancers can be correctly gauged.

The Bournonville system gives exceptional speed, lightness, elevation and *batterie* to dancers of both sexes. (As regards the last named, it is interesting to note that the decline of good *batterie* in our English dancers coincides with the decline of the French influence in this country which up to thirty or thirty-five years ago was still predominant). As against this,

the lack of good *port de bras* and *épaulement*, the tendency to bent knees and untidy feet and an unsteady finish to turns must rank as weaknesses. It must not be thought, however, that these faults are so overriding that they outweigh the virtues. Although the style gives better results with the men whose natural strength helps them in turns and jumps, the girls do have a very high standard of technical skill which lacks the final elegance only because the Bournonville system does not give it.

It is undoubtedly true that, generally speaking, the men do outshine the girls. Another reason for this predominance is that Bournonville was himself a great character dancer. At a time when choreographers were concerned only with the ballerina he was creating ballets which provided excellent roles for himself and for other male character dancers. The next great ballet-master in the history of the Royal Danish Ballet is Hans Beck, again a character dancer. He is still alive, and two years ago, at the age of eighty-eight, he supervised rehearsals of the revival of one of the Bournonville ballets and himself demonstrated all the character dances. This tradition of the character-dancer/ballet-master/choreographer is carried on today by Harald Lander who is an authority on folk dancing and has also studied in Russia. He has already introduced many reforms to the old Bournonville system (up to a few years ago children were actually allowed on point at the age of seven) but



KIRSTEN RALOV AND
FREDERBJORN BJORNSSON
IN 'DIANA'

Photograph by Baron

several 'Bournonville classes' a week are still the rule.

I have spent some time in trying to explain the differences which English ballet goers would find in these Danish dancers because it is all too easy to take for granted that what is not quite the same as what we know must necessarily be 'wrong'. That is not the way to appreciate the many outstanding and delightful qualities in these dancers.

SOME OF THE DANISH BALLETS

So now I come to the repertoire although it must be understood that I saw only a very small, though representative, part in the eight days of the Festival.

One of the major treasures of the Royal Danish Ballet is its production of August Bournonville's three-act ballet *Napoli*. This is only a few months younger than *Giselle* and what makes it so unusual is that at that period an essentially 'character' ballet should have been created. Only the middle act is 'romantic' and this is now so heavily cut that it is the least important of the three.

The story tells of a young fisherman and the girl he loves who take his boat sailing in the Bay of Naples. A storm comes up, the girl is apparently drowned but the sailor, inspired by the local priest goes to seek her, finds her transformed into a water nymph by Golfo, King of the sea sprites and, by the aid of a medallion of the Madonna, transforms her back into her human shape and returns happily to Naples, where the whole town celebrates their return.

The first act is almost entirely mime with the whole company appearing as fishermen and fisher girls, inn keepers, street performers, sellers in the market place, students and every kind of character imaginable. The action of the plot itself is very slow but the acting ability of the company keeps interest alive. In the background Vesuvius gently puffs out steam and occasional flame and by the time I saw this ballet I was quite prepared for a full-scale eruption which I am confident the stage hands could have managed to perfection. However I had to be content with a violent storm.

The second act is set in the grotto of Golfo, King of the sea sprites. This act used to last about an hour and was considered so boring that most people stayed in the bars for it. It has now been cut but I feel that the English delight in pantomime transformation scenes would have revelled in the original form even though there is little more than some conventional *ballabile* as regards the dancing. What is left includes some wonderful 'magic', for Gennaro rows his boat not only across the back of the stage, which is the mouth of the cave, but half way down the middle, apparently winding in and out of the rocks. Teresina's peasant dress is whisked away in less than a twinkling when she is transformed into a sea sprite and with another whisk it reappears when she regains

her human form. It is absolutely impossible to see how this is done. Then she and Gennaro climb back into the boat and away they row. The stage hands at Covent Garden who make such heavy weather of manipulating the shell craft across the back of the stage in *Le Lac des Cygnes* would hide their heads in shame if they could see this done.

So to the third act which is the glory of *Napoli* and about which every Dane speaks with a glow of national pride. After a preliminary procession, this develops into a series of most wonderful tarantellas danced in all manner of combinations of girls and boys until a magnificent climax of another procession, when the firing of muskets sets off half a dozen men in a final delirium of spinning. The curtain falls on the lovers and their friends in or around a decorated cart which is borne triumphantly round the stage.

During this act the bridge which forms the back of the set is thronged with children from the ballet school, all dressed in Neopolitan costumes. They watch the whirling groups below them with intent interest for they know that one day they will be down there and (who can tell?) dancing as one of the soloists. For there is not one of the leading dancers in *Napoli* who was not once a child on the bridge and subsequently some member of the crowd scene.

The two leading parts are not particularly outstanding though the man definitely scores over the girl who has no important solo and no big *pas de deux*. It is the team work and those tarantellas which make it wonderful entertainment.

BOURNONVILLE'S 'LA SYLPHIDE'

The other Bournonville ballet we saw was his version of *La Sylphide*. He arranged this for Lucile Grahn, his favourite ballerina, four years after the Filippo Taglioni creation. The music is by a Danish composer, Herman Lovenskjold and at a first hearing is much on a par with the Schneitzhoeffter score. Although the programme calls it 'a ballet by August Bournonville after Filippo Taglioni', the choreography is very different from the Gsovsky reproduction which is all we have seen in England. It is certainly very much better on the whole but this is not to say that it is necessarily superior to the original for we cannot say how far Gsovsky was able to reconstruct this accurately. Since the music is by another composer it is probable that 'after Filippo Taglioni' was simply a Bournonville courtesy in acknowledging the origins of the story.

I missed the first act *pas de trois* for the Sylphide, Effie and James, and I very much disliked the characterisation of Gurn as a kind of red-nosed comedian, which makes Effie's sudden *volte face* not only even more unlikely but distasteful. Otherwise this production has a wonderful period charm and a particularly



Action photograph by Baron

GERDA KARSTENS AS THE MOTHER, BORGE RALOV AND KIRSTEN RALOV AS THE LOVERS AND JAN HOLME AS THE MONK IN 'NAPOLI'

LEFT TO RIGHT: KATE MELCHERT, POUL GNATT, MARGRETHE SCHANNE, KIRSTEN RALOV, INGE SAND, ERIK BRUHN AND TONI LANDER IN THE LAST ACT OF 'NAPOLI'

Photograph by Baron





'THE CAPRICES OF
CUPID AND THE MAITRE
DE BALLET'

Action photograph
by Baron

beautiful set for the woodland glade. It was delightful to have the Sylphide really flying up the chimney and disappearing most convincingly when James covers her with his plaid: and I never did discover how Madge made her first appearance. At the end the Sylphide most touchingly ascends to heaven attended by baby sylphs on either side.

The part of James (very well taken by Poul Gnatt) is much better provided with dancing opportunities than in the version we have seen. Also there are two fine male solos (danced by Erik Bruhn and Fredbjörn Björnsson) in the first act, while the Scottish dance ensembles are splendidly arranged and danced.

Margrethe Schanne (who appeared briefly in this country with Les Ballets des Champs Elysées) is a perfect Sylphide in type, with large, wistful eyes in a pointed face, and great lightness and elevation in her dancing. She has a particularly enchanting solo in the second act. Madge the Witch is magnificently mimed by Gerda Karstens.

THE OLDEST BALLET

There is one ballet in the repertoire which is even older than *La Sylphide*. This is *The Caprices of Cupid and the Maître de Ballet*. It is by Vincenzo Galeotti and no one knows whether it post-dates or ante-dates *La Fille Mal Gardée* by a few months: anyway there is little in it either way. The difference between the two ballets is that nothing remains of the original choreography of *La Fille Mal Gardée* whereas *The Caprices* is substantially the same today as it was in 1786. It is extremely simple in theme. Couples from countries all over Europe (with half-a-dozen negroes, a pair of Quakers and an elderly couple of unspecified nationality thrown in) come to Cupid's altar to be married. Cupid, in a mischievous mood, orders them all to be blindfolded and then

proceeds to marry them all to each other in the most unsuitable manner possible. The ballet is chiefly an excuse for a set of excellent national and character dances but its finale, with all the couples wildly trying to escape each other and find their personally chosen mates, is one of the funniest episodes ever seen on a ballet stage. Chaos appears to be reigning but it is all most carefully ordered.

THE DANISH 'COPPELIA'

Two other remarkable productions of ballets well-known elsewhere are *Coppélia* and *Petrouchka*. The Danish *Coppélia* must certainly be the best extant today. It was arranged by Hans Beck almost entirely as a character ballet and has had more recent alterations made by Harald Lander. It is just about perfect now and with this company's almost fanatical loyalty to the shape of a work is likely to remain so. Swanilda's friends do not dance a set of classical variations and the czardas and mazurka in the first act are much extended. In the last act the Dance of the Hours becomes a most charming *pas de deux* for Swanilda and Franz. Dawn, Prayer and Work are most welcome in their absence, and Franz has a magnificent character solo which is followed by another one, not so good but with a terrific finale, for another man.

Every Dane I spoke to was apologetic about the fact that Margot Lander was no longer dancing Swanilda, which it appears was her best part. I can well believe that her dancing was technically much superior to that of Inge Sand but the latter is a ballet sou-brette of the first quality. In the second act she remains a doll throughout so that the Spanish and Scottish solos are enormously funny and far from being sentimental over the recumbent Franz, she is extremely annoyed at his obstinate slumbers. There

is a glorious set of automaton and the way in which the Clown, after his mechanism had run down, gave one belated and defiant little 'pom' on his drum won every heart. This being Dr. Coppélius's workshop of course there are several half-made dolls lying about and it is one of these that Franz heartlessly throws at the old man when he and Swanilda run away. As the curtain falls poor Dr. Coppélius is crouched on the floor anxiously hugging it to him for safety, his concern no longer being for the ruined Coppélia but for the unborn child of his imagination.

The third act starts, as it logically should, with Swanilda and Franz escaping from the house back to the life in the square.

Never again will the critics be able to take refuge in the half-hearted phrase, 'A- B- did all that was possible with the unrewarding part of Franz'. The Franz of this production is almost the most interesting male part in all ballet. He not only has an eye for Coppélia but for every pretty girl in the village and Swanilda is plainly going to have her hands full keeping him in order. Fredbjörn Björnsson, who plays him, is one of those dancers who always seems to do the right thing by instinct and has a perfectly wonderful time every second he is on the stage. I shall remember the enormous wink of pure pleasure which he gave his partner as he whirled her round in the czardas though I doubt whether he had any idea he was doing it.

Even with such a Swanilda and Franz the ballet still has the additional glory of Niels Björn Larsen's Dr. Coppélius. Far from monopolising practically every minute of the action, he does not appear until the end of the first act, he is played perfectly straight and he nearly breaks your heart.

This *Coppélia* is perhaps ten or fifteen minutes shorter than the Sadler's Wells version. It is given with two other ballets in the programme.

A DEFINITIVE 'PETROUCHKA'

In 1925 Fokine visited Copenhagen and mounted *Petrouchka* for the Royal Danish Ballet. One of the several Benois decors was used—the revolving wheel in the first scene, the tiger wallpaper in the Blackamoor's room—and Fokine plainly spent much time on every detail of the crowd movement which unfortunately he failed to do with the original production which is why so much has been lost down the years. In Copenhagen we therefore see a *Petrouchka* performed as the master would have wished it, most faithfully remembered and adhered to, with a crowd scene in which every dancer knows exactly what he or she should be doing every second and does it most faithfully. Here once more are the nursemaids with their fat red cheeks and their dresses of pink, blue and yellow, the coachmen and grooms, the street dan-



Photograph by Baron

NIELS BJORN LARSEN AND INGE SAND IN THE SECOND ACT OF 'COPPELIA'

cers, the revellers of all kinds doing no more and no less than has been set down for them.

Svend Erik Jensen is a good Blackamoor, Kirsten Ralov is an incredibly vapid and heartless Doll and Børge Ralov, the leading male soloist of the company, is without qualification the greatest *Petrouchka* of the day. Here at last we have that putty face with the distorted mouth which cannot express what the tortured eyes are trying to say, and the sawdust body in which beats the breaking heart to which no one will listen.

If anyone has felt of recent years that *Petrouchka* is either a lost masterpiece or must always have been over-rated, then let him wait until he has seen what the Danish Ballet has to show before making a final decision.

Chopiniana is another matter. This is *Les Sylphides* called by the title of Fokine's first version to avoid confusion with *La Sylphide*. It contains a great many of Fokine's afterthoughts, none of them, alas, very happy ones, and the lyrical-romantic style is the one least suited to these dancers. Only Margrethe Schanne's Prelude has the right atmosphere.

A NOTABLE 'GISELLE'

The other ballet in this repertoire known to all ballet goers is *Giselle*. This was arranged by Alexandre Volinine and is, I believe, very close to the version danced by Pavlova which possibly accounts for some of the weaknesses in the first act, for Pavlova liked to do what suited her best and also cared very little about what else was going on.

The opening is excellent. Hilarion (the amazing Larsen) comes on and in half a minute we know that he is an honest forester in love with Giselle and deeply suspicious of the young upstart in the opposite cottage. Wilfred is much less a stage stooge than usual so it is all the more of a shock when he leads the Prince of Courland and his entourage to Giselle's cottage. All through this act the good and bad alternate in this way. We have, however, the Giselle's mother of Gerda Karstens which at long last shows her as a buxom country woman of early middle age, full of forebodings for her daughter and finally overcome with simple peasant grief.

The second act is superb, with a very lovely set. Glow worms gleam all over the stage and the lake shimmers in the moonlight. Hilarion senses the presence of the Wilis long before he is caught and really drowned, the Queen of the Wilis and Giselle both appear out of the earth, and at the end Giselle is gently laid in another grave into which she sinks while flowers rise up and cover her.

Margrethe Schanne has the makings of an outstanding Giselle and only needs further experience both in the acting and the actual dancing. She is ideal in appearance for this type of role. Kirsten Ralov is a commanding Queen of the Wilis though her makeup is not striking enough. Börge Ralov is an unsympathetic Albrecht in the first act, altogether too casual in manner, but he is very fine indeed in the second act and dances the solo magnificently. Incidentally this Albrecht has more dancing in the first act than in other versions.

This kind of ballet does not show the *corps de ballet* to advantage but, all in all, this production is as good as any I have seen with the exception of that of Festival Ballet.

THE MODERN REPERTOIRE

Of the modern repertoire presented during the Festival week, the ballet with which I was particularly struck was Harald Lander's *Etude* in which, to music by Czerny, he presents a Bournonville class beginning with dancers at the bar then continuing in the centre and working through typically charming *enchaînements* to short solo passages and *pas de deux*. This presents the style at its best. Erik Bruhn has some wonderful moments but the high spot of the ballet is to see *twelve* male dancers one after the other doing *brisés volés* diagonally across the stage, and then a moment later all assembled in a pattern to perform every variety of *entrechat* and beaten step—and everyone a Babilée for that moment. The way in which the stage was successively opened to its whole tremendous depth and the way those dancers covered that expanse, particularly the little girl leading the *corps de ballet* who flew and bounced all over

it at incredible speed will be one of my never fading memories.

Another Lander ballet which did not seem quite fully worked out but which even so gripped the imagination was his *Diana* to the Poulenc *Aubade* which has twice before been used for this theme. Lander's is undoubtedly the best version and he conveys with great subtlety that Diana has been overlooked while bathing simply by having her nymphs remove the gauze scarf she wears over a particularly lovely midnight blue tutu. Kirsten Ralov, who is the strongest personality amongst the young *danseuses*, is a regal Diana, momentarily unfreezing and then once more implacable, while Björnsson quite agonisingly turns into a stag before our eyes. Unfortunately there is not enough music for his terrible death as the victim of the hounds who, a moment before, had fawned on him, and this is probably why the ballet does not make quite the impression that it should.

TWO BARTHOLIN BALLETS

The same trouble about insufficient music is to be found in the Birger Bartholin version of the Tchaikovsky *Romeo and Juliet*. Realising this himself, he has been intelligent enough not to attempt to tell the story but simply picks out two or three episodes which will best fit the music. Accordingly he gives us two exciting fight *ensembles* for the servants of Montague and Capulet and a vivid choreographic duel between Romeo and Tybalt (Bruhn and Björnsson). The death of Romeo and Juliet (a tender Toni Lander) is dignified and moving.

Bartholin's other ballet to Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* shows up the classical shortcomings of the *corps de ballet*. Their *port de bras* was dreadfully messy and they seemed to be all over the place when a straight line was called for. However, his dances for the soloists were inventive and charming including a wickedly funny spoof Gavotte for Kirsten Ralov and Poul Gnatt—the latter marvellously mincing.

We saw two other Lander ballets, *Morning, Noon and Night* in the Spanish idiom which had atmosphere but little action, and *Qarrtsiluni* which showed a primitive people waiting for the first rising of the sun after the long months of winter. I felt that the moment when the sun at last rose did not quite have the tremendous spiritual uplift it should have had, but as an experiment in rhythmic movement it was well worth seeing.

'LE BEAU DANUBE'

This is so very much the kind of ballet this company should do better than anyone else that it is all the more a pity that Massine could only spare three days in which to teach it. Since these dancers are so loyal to the work of a choreographer that they do not put in what is not there, the impression on this



Action photograph by Baron

GERDA KARSTENS AND OLLE PALLE HANSEN IN 'THE CAPRICES OF CUPID AND THE MAITRE DE BALLET'

occasion is like a preliminary sketch rather than the finished painting. Even so all the smaller parts are perfectly done and Svend Erik Jensen would be the best Dandy since Shabolevsky if only half the choreography had not been lost years ago. The trouble with Frank Schaufuss as the Hussar is that he is a tall man and movements ideally suitable for the small Massine look coy on him. This was the one piece of real mis-casting I saw and could have been avoided if Massine had spared the time to modify the part ever so slightly. Schaufuss' partnering is outstandingly good, and Mona Vangsaa as the Street Dancer is well up in the line stretching behind the incomparable Danilova.

SOME BALLETS I DID NOT LIKE

I should not have expected that in eight consecutive nights of watching the same company I would not see anything I did not like. Where I felt the Danes went sadly astray was in their 'modernistic' works of which I saw three. They were all by different choreographers, *Drift* (translated as 'Desire' but 'Lust' is nearer the real meaning), by Niels Björn Larsen, *The Widow in the Mirror* by Børge Ralov and *Metaphor* by Nini Theilade. The Danes seem such a happy, simple-hearted people that perhaps when they dive into symbolism and Freudian complexes and all the claptrap that goes with the current jargon they are out of their depth at once. All these ballets

seemed strangely nineteen-twenty-ish, though in each instance the dancers did their utmost with recalcitrant themes. I particularly admired Mona Vangsaa in *Metaphor*, not only for her fine dancing but for the way in which she never allowed her face to reveal for an instant that she did not know what it was all about.

ABOUT THE DANCERS

Now a little about the dancers, a few of whom I have been able to mention in connection with the ballets discussed. It is true that the Danish Ballet has now no great classical ballerina which would be a serious lack if this situation lasted for a number of years. Toni Lander comes nearest to possessing the style we ourselves expect to see in the purely classical roles but her technique is not yet brilliant enough. She dances the *Nutcracker pas de deux* with gentle grace rather than the crisp precision needed. As she is still only in her 'teens the next few years may very well see a great development. I have mentioned the other leading soloists in various roles all of which show their typical talents. I thought Kirsten Ralov the most interesting with her versatility, beauty and alert wide eyes, a little like our own Sally Gilmour, but Margrethe Schanne is also a most delightful artist of a seemingly more limited type. Gerda Karstens, now primarily a mime, deservedly gets 'top billing' on the list of soloists. England, France and America cannot show a single artist in this particular class and never will be able to so long as dancers and directors alike place the accent exclusively on youth.

The leading male dancer is Børge Ralov, no longer a very young man but still an extremely fine dancer and a wonderful mime both in classical and character roles. The billing of the dancers goes strictly in order of seniority after Ralov, the undisputed star, so that Fredbjörn Björnsson and Erik Bruhn bring up the rear. They are more prominent in the current repertoire than one or two other of the soloists but they are the youngest so must bide their time. They are the potential future stars in the character and classical field.

The work of Bruhn, Gnatt and Schaufuss has been seen and much admired in this country. Bruhn is dancing better than we ever saw him which will give those who remember him some measure of his present achievements, and only needs to open out his shoulders and overcome that tendency not to stretch his foot in a leap until it is about to touch the floor to be a classical dancer in the Youskevitch-Egleyevsky class. In the *Nutcracker* solo he performed a *manège* of *coupés jetés en tournant* in which from first to last he retained the full height of the jump. The highest tribute a Danish audience can pay a dancer is to applaud slowly and rhythmically after the first spon-

taneous outbreak. The dancers do not return to the stage to take calls and the length of time before this applause dies down is the measure of audience appreciation. This happened to Bruhn after this particular solo.

Poul Gnat's *batterie* is still phenomenal even in a company where everyone can beat and he is one of those dancers who always does well in every variety of part. The outstanding feature of Schaufuss's work is his partnering.

Niels Björn Larsen is the masculine counterpart of Gerda Karstens and just as unique as a mime. (How often I have used that word in this article; but it was salutary to come from a country where we pride ourselves on 'keeping the tradition of mime' alive because all our dancers can wave their hands round their faces and point to their ring fingers, and discover a company which does not pride itself in the least but quietly takes it for granted that every member has a complete command of gesture and expressive movement).

Fredbjörn Björnsson, an Icelandic, is, unless I am much mistaken, the coming great character dancer—the kind of dancer I had feared was almost extinct everywhere but in Russia. He is fortunate in being a member of the one company (again excepting Russia) that has a repertoire which can make full use of such talent. He dances as naturally as he breathes, and, what is so rare in a man, uses his hands most beautifully and simply.

Amongst the innumerable talented boys in the *corps de ballet* Kjeld Noack is obviously just on the verge of bigger things.

SOME FINAL REMARKS

These are some of the dancers and if you can bear with me a little longer I would like to make a few last comments.

I have already mentioned a Danish method of applause. There are no curtain calls at the Royal Theatre. It seems that a hundred and three years ago there was so much trouble over jealous opera singers that calls were officially forbidden and no one has since rescinded the order (or apparently regretted it). As a special concession to the Ballet Festival the curtain went up once only on the whole company. The audience therefore claps and occasionally cheers most warmly for half a minute and then gets up and goes quietly off. This rule is waived for a guest artist from abroad and for one other occasion—the retirement of a dancer after long service.

On the last night of the Festival one of those wonderful mimes made his final appearance. This was Aage Eibye who played the manager in *Le Beau Danube* (what a performance it was!) and 'stopped the show' on his entrance. Then, as it was the last



Action photograph by Baron

ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH OF BORGE RALOV AS PETROUCHKA

ballet, he came on as a leader of the procession in *Napoli*. After the single curtain had been taken by the company he took one on his own, standing on the stage of the theatre in which he had worked for fifty-seven years, for he had gone there as a little boy of six; and as the whole audience cheered and applauded him, the King and Queen of Denmark leaned forward in their box to clap this faithful servant of the state.

I am very proud and happy to think that I was there to see this, for it seems to me that it typifies what a State Theatre can mean to a country.

The Royal Danish Ballet is, perhaps, a little out of touch with developments in the great world but if it could learn something from other countries, very certainly other countries could learn much from it. It is a national treasure but for its sake and for the sake of all ballet lovers everywhere it should have an international reputation.

The photograph by H. M. Mydstkov on the cover is of Margrethe Schanne and Fredbjörn Björnsson of the Royal Danish Ballet in 'Symphonie Classique' by Birger Bartholin.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THIS issue is dedicated with affection and admiration to the Royal Danish Ballet. In the past *Ballet Today* has been proud to publish introductory articles on companies about to appear in this country for the first time so that ballet lovers would know something about these companies beforehand. There is not at the moment any definite news of a visit to England by the Royal Danish Ballet but it is already so strong a possibility for 1952 that it is not too soon for us to start getting acquainted through the written word. And if such a season does not, for one reason or another materialise, why then, there will be another Danish Ballet Festival in the first week of June next year, Copenhagen is only thirty hours away from London and is one of the most beautiful and hospitable cities in the world, besides being the home of a great Ballet as I hope I have been able to convince you.

'TIRESIAS'

The sheer hard labour involved in writing down a musical score, quite apart from the actual composition, is in itself so tedious that no composer having gone through the agony would willingly cut a bar; but unless Constant Lambert is prepared to be utterly ruthless and blue-pencil a full half-hour out of the present hour-long score of *Tiresias* I cannot see anything for the ballet but a speedy oblivion. The thirty minutes which would be left would give us a chance to appreciate the many individually fine moments of Ashton's choreography. As it stands at present, the ballet is like a hundred foot string of china beads amongst which some genuine pearls are almost lost to sight. In the first scene there is no need for the interminable dance of Tiresias after he has established his athletic supremacy with some excellent acrobatics (this could very well be extended and the dance cut altogether), the *corps de ballet* play for

time for minutes on end, while the waving back and forth of the wand of honour only induces hypnotic sleep in the audience. The second scene does not need so much attention, but could still be cut a little with advantage even though it would mean sacrificing a little of Fonteyn who is exquisite. The quarrel of Zeus and Hera and the manoeuvrings of the *corps de ballet* in the last scene again threaten to go on forever, though since there is no dramatic tension in the story it is essential that Tiresias should appear as soon as possible and make the decision that strikes him blind.

Somes had great dignity as the old, and subsequently blinded Tiresias and also started well with some hand springs and back somersaults, but became thoroughly bogged down in the wellnigh endless perambulations round the stage necessitated by the music.

I cannot imagine why Lambert ever thought that this Greek myth had any balletic possibilities, and one can only sympathise with Ashton at being given this story and an hour-long score with which to make his contribution to Ballet in Festival Year. In his anxiety to make unobjectionable the theme of man transformed into woman and then again into man he has eschewed all emotion to such good purpose that we cannot find in ourselves any pity for a Tiresias struck blind at the whim of an infuriated goddess. Ashton, the artist, makes but a brief appearance here but, were the ballet cut by half, we should be able to see that he was still at work.

(Continued on page 15, column 1)

THE SIE BROTHERS IN 'THEIR BALINESE 'WITCH DANCE'. WITH THEIR SISTER TAMARA THEY ARE NOW TOURING THE PRINCIPAL TOWNS OF SWITZERLAND AND GERMANY

Photograph by Duncan Melvin



GALINA ULANOVA AND YURI KONDRATOV, STARS OF THE SOVIET BALLET, DANCE AT THE FOURTEENTH FLORENCE FESTIVAL

By FERDINAND REYNA

IN addition to operas and concerts, the Florence Festival this year also gave prominence to the Dance and Ballet. Anticipation was all the more lively because a group of dancers and musicians from the U.S.S.R. had been given permission to appear.

We heard soloists of astonishing bravura such as the pianist, Emil Ghilels, the violinist, Galina Barinova, and the 'cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich, and singers of great power in the soprano, Nadiesda Kazantseva, mezzo soprano Zara Dolukhanova and Maksim Mikhailov, bass. Their instrumental playing and their voices all have an academic character, they are concerned with the execution of the work rather than in the effect they are having on the public. There is no effusion, no personal lyricism, still less any seeking after effect. Their personalities are resolutely subjugated to their art.

I have spoken of the musicians and singers, but this same detachment is shown by the dancers.

Galina Ulanova and Yuri Kondratov danced at the Teatro Comunale on the 14th, 16th and 20th June, presenting four or five numbers in a concert shared by the musicians. Two pianists accompanied them. Times of rehearsals were kept secret so that no journalists could be present.

When the curtain rose on the Adagio from *Casse-Noisette* we found ourselves in the presence of an astounding pair: she, extremely light, delicate, with turns of a stupefying assurance, impeccable bal-

ance with the *aplomb* of a great star, magnificent *port de bras* and perfect musicality. He, a young athlete, thick-set, with the thighs and torso of a wrestler whose role was that of partner and *porteur*. In fact, he lifted her extremely high, even *on the palm of one hand* in the acrobatic manner of the Italian dancers of 1890. Kondratov does not seem like a present day dancer but rather like one of the past epoch when the man was relegated to second place. However he astonished us with a variation from *Le Lac des Cygnes* such as we are not used to seeing nowadays. Yuri Kondratov, very strong, does not give one a feeling of heaviness but his *cabrioles* are without brilliance and he is really too solidly built.

A scene from *The Red Poppy* had nothing particularly remarkable in its choreography. On the other hand Ulanova was most beautiful in *La Mort du Cygne*, expressive, with a moving gravity, truly a great artist. In Schumann's 'Chopin' from *Carnaval*, danced as a *pas de deux*, Ulanova waved a large veil in the manner of the Pavlova-Duncan era. All this was beautifully executed with perfect seriousness and without a trace of irony. As a finale, a choreographic version of a Rubinstein waltz danced by the two Soviet dancers which is certainly not to the taste of our present-day public. It is very elementary and does not reveal any particular feeling for refinement. It recalls certain productions by the Sakharoffs, without the affectations.

The conclusion to be drawn from this performance is this; if we are to judge Soviet Ballet from what we saw from these two stars, it would seem that the School of Soviet Dance remains in the period at the beginning of the 1900's when Diaghilev left with Pavlova, Nijinsky and Karsavina. There seems to be no intruding echo there of the innumerable experiences which have carried the academic dance to the point where we find it today.

There is a lesson to be learned from these performances; Galina Ulanova and her partner, artists worthy of every consideration, have remained simple, not seeking effect, showing no exhibitionism nor indulging in *tours de force* which in other countries have reached a point where they become boring. At times they even appear impersonal, like the musicians of whom I spoke earlier.

Mr. Volto who was in charge of the Florence Festival, is to be congratulated for enabling us at last to

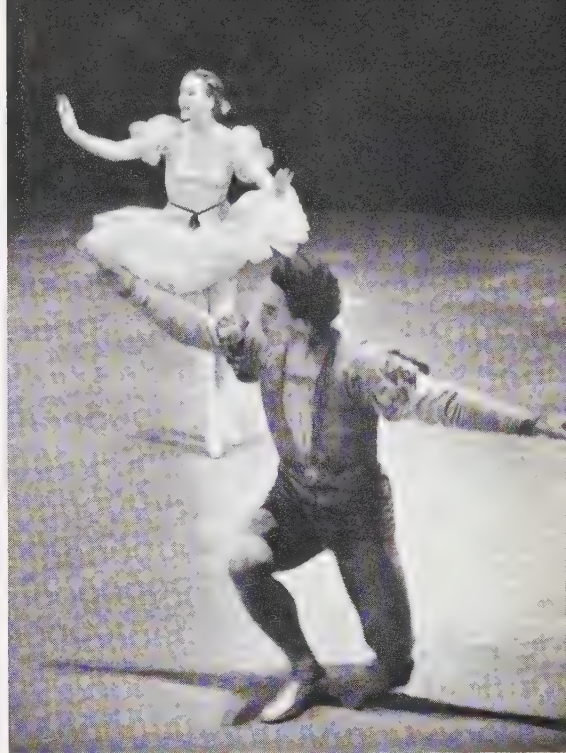
GALINA ULANOVA PHOTOGRAPHED ON HER ARRIVAL IN FLORENCE
Photograph by Levi





Photograph by Levi

ULANOVA ACKNOWLEDGING A CALL



Photograph by Levi

ULANOVA WITH KONDRATOV IN 'CASSE NOISETTE'

make contact with the Soviet Dance which for most of us has hitherto been a mystery, by these memorable performances which we shall never forget.

(Editorial Comment—continued from page 13)

MARGOT FONTEYN, C.B.E.

In recent years there have been several state recognitions of services to ballet. None has ever been more warmly welcomed by the public than the C.B.E. conferred upon Margot Fonteyn in the last Birthdays Honours List. Such an honour is very rarely conferred on one so young, so it is all the more gratifying to realise that her services as an artist who has brought international prestige to her country are recognised while she is still at the height of her career. P.W.M.

LEEDS BALLET CIRCLE

Applications for membership should now be sent to the Chairman, Mr. R. Walker, Flat 2, 57 Spencer Place, Leeds 7. Tel.: 48716.

[Owing to pressure of space, "Ballet Vocabulary" is held over until next month.]

RAMBERT BALLET

The Rambert Ballet celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a party at the Mercury Theatre on July 29th. It was in June, 1926, that Marie Rambert presented Frederick Ashton's first ballet, *A Tragedy of Fashion* with herself and Ashton in the leading parts, in Sir Nigel Playfair's famous Lyric Theatre revue, *Riverside Nights*. From this performance grew the Rambert Dancers, later known as the Rambert Ballet.

The company is at present appearing at the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, as part of the Festival celebrations. Their subsequent itinerary is as follows:—

August 13th, for one week.

Grand Theatre, Plymouth

August 20th, for two weeks.

Repertory Theatre, Birmingham.

September 3rd, for one week.

Guildhall Theatre, St. Ives, Cornwall.

September 10th, for one week.

Theatre Royal, Exeter.

September 17th, for one week.

Prince of Wales Theatre, Cardiff.

MIA SLAVENSKA AND THE POLOVTSIAN DANCES FROM "PRINCE IGOR"

THE LAST WEEKS OF THE FESTIVAL BALLET LONDON SEASON

TOWARDS the end of the long season by Festival Ballet at the Stoll Theatre it was becoming obvious that there was a limit to the number of times an audience was prepared to sit through a very small repertoire even with world-renowned guest artists as bait. If the directors wish to consolidate Festival Ballet's position they will have to give serious thought to the question of new works. This is the most difficult problem ballet companies have to face for, though there are more trained and half-trained dancers needing employment today than ever in the whole history of Ballet, choreographic talent is almost as rare as it always has been. It is, however, the life blood of Ballet as the history of any company will show.

Those who remember the beautiful Mia Slavenska with her virtuoso technique and flamboyant personality before the war were surprised and delighted to find that America has not emphasised either but rather softened and refined both. Those who had never seen her before and were possibly surprised to see her turning *fouettés* on her right foot may be interested to learn that she was one of the very few dancers who could turn thirty-two *fouettés* with equal facility in either direction. This astounding piece of virtuosity stood her in good stead when she hurt her left foot some time ago. Although it is now better she still prefers to take the strain on her right foot for a long series of turns.

The revival of the *Polovtsian Dances from "Prince Igor"* (June 18th) which Nicolas Beriosoff produced is the best seen here since before the war. Beriosoff deserves great credit for his memory and his careful rehearsing. The reproduction of the Roerich decor is also extremely well done. It should be smokier and with a redder glow and the Polovtsian warriors should all roll in the dust for a while, but otherwise it is remarkably faithful to the original setting. The dancers, too, seem to love performing it—and no wonder, for after forty-two years it still stands as a superb piece of *ensemble* choreography. Paula Hinton has a true Slav savagery as the Polovtsian Girl, with Nathalie Krassovska in gentle contrast. Vassili Trunoff gives a most exciting performance in all the solo portions of his role as the Polovtsian Chief but he needs to assert himself more when he is dancing with the others as he tends to sink into the *ensemble* whereas he should always be the dominating figure.

Since this production is so good already I should like to criticise two points which can easily be put right. The overture which Borodin wrote for the ballet is far more suitable as a prelude to these barbaric dances than the overture to the opera itself which was played at the Stoll. Also, when the curtain goes up the Polovtsian Chief should be lying down stage left (right to the audience) with his head towards the footlights. His awakening, rising and kicking his companions into life is the preliminary for all the excitement which follows. I was shocked to find in 1947 that Grigorieff had forgotten this after all his years as *régisieur-général* to both the Diaghilev and Col. de Basil Ballets Russes, and I should therefore like to see Beriosoff return the Chief to his rightful position in his otherwise splendidly reproduced version.

Festival Ballet has another tour ahead of it after a short holiday and a New Year return visit to Monte Carlo. A new ballet based on Verdi's *La Traviata* (this will be the third based on the *Dame aux Camélias* theme though the first to be seen here) is down for production. Doubtless subsequent plans include a further London season. When this happens I beg leave to hope that there will be no more of this nonsense of charging one shilling for a programme only one loose sheet of which is of any use after the first visit.

P.W.M.

Bouquet of the Month



A particular lovely bouquet for Noel Rossana, not for one special role but for all the delightful impressions she made in a number of parts during the Festival Ballet season: most of all, perhaps, for her sly little Cerito, the baby of this *Pas de Quatre*, though not of the actual one.



Photograph by Paul Wilson
PAULA HINTON, VASSILI TRUNOFF AND NATHALIE KRASSOVSKA
IN "THE DANCES FROM "PRINCE IGOR" "



Photograph by Paul Wilson
JOHN GILPIN AND TATIANA RIABOUCHINSKA IN
'LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE'

FOLK DANCES OF THE BRITISH ISLES

By W. G. RAFFÉ

THREE days of folk-dance and music filled the programme at the Albert Hall in June—with a few more in the parks, as at Parliament Hill, under the direction of Douglas Kennedy. The English Folk Dance and Song Society has now had its headquarters rebuilt after the bombing; and membership is rapidly increasing, as might be expected with the hard work put in, and the most attractive displays offered, many at Cecil Sharp House and twice annually at the Albert Hall.

Folk-dances of Britain are sufficiently numerous and varied to fill a generous programme though none of them are as long as some of the Indian folk-dances. In addition we had as 'guest artists' a fine team from Yugoslavia, for both dances and songs. In precision and rhythm they could give points to many a *corps de ballet* team; indeed, in the *Shesh-tocka* one could detect the probable origin of Petipas' 'little cygnet's dance' in *Swan Lake* but much better shaped.

The programme on the evening I watched began with English sea shanties; a rope-haul; a hornpipe, and the Flamboro' Sword Dance. This was a team of twenty-four men, a bo'sun and two musicians. The 'Grenoside' Sword Dance that followed revealed more of the ritual origins than do most versions: there is a 'beheading' of the initiated one (who is here the singer also) by the Raz or rose, which is a hexagonal one. Some carry eight sides; and one showed only a set of five rappers—they probably present some different lines of tradition.

The Scottish dances—a team of four men and four girls in tartan kilt or scarves—performed Strathspey and Reel, such as "Glasgow Highlands" and "Lord Rosslyn's Fancy"—with aristocratic grace to the lilt of Tim Wright's band—we could have done with more pipes. We could have done with more public display. Why our wealthy nationalised Arts Council could not have co-ordinated better this marvellous treasury of ancient British dance art with their Fes-

tival, passes our comprehension! They seem to prefer to waste national money on the Boiled Potato Sculpture laddies. The E.F.D.S. needs cash for its building; but has got only a 'Painting' from them.

That worthy ancient William Kimber—Cecil Sharp's old cully from Headington—was there to fiddle for his village, in 'Country Gardens' and 'Constant Billy'. The Welsh Youth Choir from Coedpoeth (I heard someone explaining that this was pronounced 'Codpiece', but cannot be sure) were delivered by a bevy of dames in brilliant red, black, and white national costume. You can't stop the Welsh from singing. Again I saw that interesting Isle of Man 'Dirk Dance'—a strange relic of an initiation dance in which the dirk is 'revered' both as symbol and as weapon; but not so neatly technical as the Scottish Sword dance—its analogue, which followed later.

The Padstow Hobby Horse and Mayer's dance-play is a most interesting survival; though its early meaning is deeply embedded under the modernised form; the antics of the Horse seemed somewhat overdone. The Black Bacup dancers suggest a relic of dancing darkies; the movements are feminine; so are the skirts.

The Irish dancing—solo and country dances—were given by eight pairs led by Patricia Mulholland. Their lightness and precision are notable; and as a contrast to the majority of Irish dances which use only the feet, there was one group dance of eight that suggested the 'Shamrock boys' at feud, shaking fists across the circle. Lifar might have cheered to watch the Serbian dance—'without music'—yet the reason reveals itself, as this marriage-market manoeuvre works out in subtle but unmistakable terms. All you hear is the beat of soft feet and the chink of gold-coin necklets . . . ! It begins with the women but the men appear; and they show who is master! Here is a folk dance where theme governs technique; in some other Yugoslav dances the meaning is less immediately seen.

Many of the audience who applauded these Yugoslav traditional dances will want to see the display at the Zagreb Festival to be held in September next. Folkdance in Eastern Europe—not having been inundated by industries and factories—are more numerous and more vigorous than many of the dances to be seen in Western Europe.

SUMMER BALLET IN NEW YORK

NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S DISTINGUISHED SEASON FEATURED NEW BALLETS BY
GEORGE BALANCHINE, RUTHANNA BORIS AND JEROME ROBBINS

By ARTHUR TODD

NEW York, unlike London, has not been accustomed to major ballet seasons during the summer months for this is generally the time of long country week-ends and the beginning of annual holidays. However, after their visit to London last summer, the Directors of the New York City Ballet were convinced that Manhattanites could and would also support a warm weather ballet season. As a result, a three-week June season was offered, running from June 5th through the 24th at the air-conditioned New York City Center, and the results have been gratifying in every respect. Patronage exceeded the management's expectations and audiences have been enthusiastic about the three new additions to the repertoire. These new works were George Balanchine's *Capriccio Brilliant*, Ruthanna Boris' *Cakewalk* and Jerome Robbins' *The Cage*. The fourth work originally scheduled, Todd Bolender's *The Miraculous Mandarin*, was postponed until the September season due to lack of proper rehearsal time.

The opening night programme was one of all-Balanchine ballets and these ranged all the way from his earlier *Serenade* to the beautiful and more recent

La Valse, including, too, *Symphony in C* and *Pas de Trois*. *La Valse*, which would be a major treasure in any company's repertoire, has grown still more in power and depth since its première last February and it continued to be one of the chief joys of this more recent season. The enthusiastic opening night audience, which was further distinguished by the presence of Miss Mary Skeaping, Ballet Mistress of Sadler's Wells, gave the company a resounding welcome, bestowing its chief acclaim on *La Valse*. Incidentally, Miss Skeaping, whose teaching schedule at the Ballet Repertory School happily coincided with the major portion of the New York City Ballet's engagement, was also on hand for each of the new premières. Consequently, the many American readers of *Ballet Today*, as well as Miss Skeaping's friends in New York and elsewhere, are hoping that she may find time to write her views on this season for a subsequent issue. Undoubtedly, her opinions and judgments on the new works would be read with considerable interest in both America and Britain.

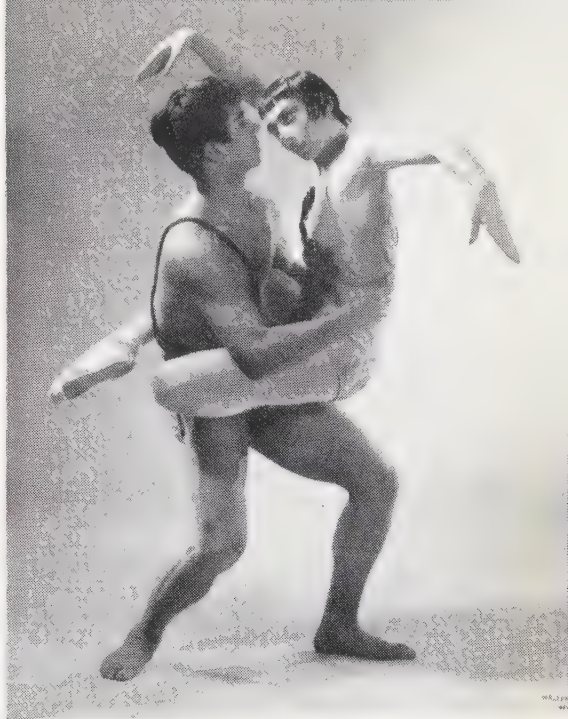
The first première of the season, George Balanchine's *Capriccio Brilliant*, set to Mendelssohn's agree-

ably unimportant music, serves chiefly as an engaging show piece for Maria Tallchief and André Eglevsky. Intimacy and informality are the keynote of this new ballet which finds the pianist seated at one side of the stage with six dancers clustered about the piano. As they hear the music, they drift into various fresh and inventive variations. These are danced by the two stars and the ensemble of four girls, all of whom gather again around the piano as the curtain falls. The use of the piano on stage serves as a visible impetus for the dancers who are charmingly costumed in black and white by Karinska.

The second new work to be unveiled was Ruthanna Boris' *Cakewalk*, which had the biggest audience acclaim of the season, requiring cast and choreographer to take a total of fourteen curtain calls on opening night. This ballet, based on the style and structure of the black-face minstrel shows of earlier days, is a purely American *genre* work that has been composed with wit, taste and imagination. The scenery and Robert Drew's colourful costumes were claimed from Ballet Society's less popular *Blackface* and Hervey Kay brilliantly arranged and orchestrated an eminently suitable score after music by Louis Moreau Gottschalk. All in all, like our *Fancy Free* and *Rodeo*, this ballet could only have been created in the United States. Likewise, it seems safe to predict, it may well be one of the company's biggest hits when they next visit Europe.

Choreographer Ruthanna Boris, until recently a ranking soloist with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and creator of the sparkling *Cirque de Deux* and *Quelques Fleurs* for that company, has made major advances in this new ballet, which is considerably broader in scope and creativeness. Designed in three sections, it introduces the cast, principal performers, interlocutor and end-men (in this case, Beatrice Tompkins and Tanaquil Le Clercq). The main section, *Programme*, consists of charming and witty *divertissements* with titles like *The Wallflower Waltz*, *Sleight of Feet*, *Perpendicular Points*, *Freebee* and *Skipaway*. The third section, concerned with magicians and their materialisations was, at the première over-long, but, nevertheless, full of wit. The work concludes with a gala *Cakewalk* in which all the company participate.

Aside from proving to be a wonderful change of pace in the repertoire, *Cakewalk* also provided some splendid opportunities for many of the company. Most outstanding was Janet Reed in the wryly sentimental *Wallflower Waltz* and, again, as Hortense, Queen of the Swamp Lilies, partnered by Herbert Bliss as Harolde, The Young Poet. Frank Hobi's *Sleight of Feet* gave him one of the most fitting roles he has had since joining the company. Similarly, Patricia Wilde danced *Freebee* and a wild pony dance with great abandon. *Cakewalk* is pure Americana



Photograph by Walter E. Owen

NORA KAYE AND NICHOLAS MAGALLANES IN 'THE CAGE'

PATRICIA WILDE AND FRANK HOBI IN 'CAKEWALK'

Photograph by Walter E. Owen



bright and bouncing—and the soloists and *ensemble* danced it to the hilt. Maybe this is America's *Pineapple Poll*, which sounds likewise native and gay from a purely British viewpoint.

The third new work of the season was Jerome Robbins' *The Cage* and it was the first such ballet to be designed specifically for the talents of Nora Kaye since this distinguished dramatic dancer joined the company. Its programme note reads:—"There occurs in certain forms of insect and animal life, and even in our own mythology, the phenomenon of the female of the species considering the male as prey. The mantis devours her partner immediately after mating; the female spider kills the male unless he attacks first and subdues her preying instincts; the Greek Amazons established a cult completely apart from men except for procreation, crippling or destroying their male offspring. The ballet, derived from these sources, concerns such a race or cult . . . the rites and blood instincts".

Hailed as a masterpiece by New York's major critics in the daily press, it has received rather mixed audience response in performance and set up reservations in the minds of many others who consider Mr. Robbins one of the most creative figures in the contemporary ballet world. Granted, the work has sting, anger and violence, it is also, somehow, rather dated and derivative in design and movement, if not in ap-

JOSE GRECO

Photograph by Estudios Campua, Madrid



proach. As long ago as 1929, Doris Humphrey's *Life of the Bee*, dealt savagely with the female of the species, though her masterpiece dealt with the rivalry of two queen bees. Moreover, much of the magnificent movement devised for Nora Kaye is closer to Martha Graham than it is to academic ballet. Though Mr. Robbins' new work reminded me most of Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham, I must add that the choreographer has used both his over-all design and individual movement creatively. Perhaps this fact alone is justification but one can still prefer the more affirmative and healthy aspects that are more in evidence in *The Guests* and, to a certain extent, *The Age of Anxiety*.

For one thing we must be grateful and that is that *The Cage* gives Nora Kaye the first and only role so far that really fits her talents in her new surroundings. (She again gave ample proof of the fact that she just is not cut out for classical roles when she appeared in *Pas de Trois*. This was only emphasised further when Melissa Hayden took over the same role a few nights later and danced it like a dream. Incidentally, it might be very interesting to see what Melissa Hayden could do with the central role in *The Cage*. Judging by her continual improvement, one can surmise that Miss Hayden would be nothing short of superb). Miss Kaye dominates the entire stage action through her innate dramatic power and this is further heightened by an *ensemble* that moves more as a unit than as individuals, be they animal or human. Based upon the music of Stravinsky's Basler Concerto, this ballet is less than a quarter of an hour in length. The action is concerned with a Novice (Nora Kaye) to whom the Queen (Yvonne Mounsey) introduces two male intruders. The first Intruder (Michael Maule) has his neck snapped between the legs of the Novice before procreation. The second figure (Nicholas Magallanes) goes through most of the actual movements of reproduction with the Novice and then he, too, is destroyed. Adding notably to the drama of this ballet were Ruth Sobotka's skeletal costumes and Jean Rosenthal's superb arrangement of coloured ropes that resemble a spidery web.

This has been the seventh season of the New York City Ballet Company and, it is pleasant to report, they continually keep improving. Some ballets like *Jones Beach* and *Baiser de la Fée* were missing, and one might wish that such a rare artist as Hugh Laing had more to do generally, especially since his *Illuminations* and *Prodigal Son* roles have been so well received. All such things, one hopes, can be adjusted in time. Meanwhile, there is a most promising September season just ahead. Mentioned for this or the November season are Frederick Ashton's *Tintagel*, Todd Bolender's *The Miraculous Mandarin* and Balanchine's re-choreographed version of *Swan Lake*.

SPAIN IN ISLINGTON AND SEVEN DIALS

By LISA GORDON SMITH

DANCE lovers, even those favoured ones in London and its environs, do not often have the opportunity of seeing two major examples of Spanish dancing which they could, if they chose, watch on alternate evenings.

The two companies (if two dancers may be called a company) appeared to remain magnificently unaware of, and certainly ungrudging of—each others' existence: not so, however, their partisans, some of whom showed a regrettable tendency to stand outside the theatres favoured by their opposite numbers and call down scorn upon the heads of their enemies' idols.

This caused no harm to anyone and provided a considerable amount of innocent fun for less ardently disposed passers-by, while the public continued to go to the theatre of their choice, or to both in turn, governed by no consideration other than personal preference and geographic accessibility.

Many people find this ardent and—dare we say?—narrowminded partisanship a deplorable thing; but history reveals that dancing, just like any other art, has always inspired periods of hot-headed and sometimes ill-advised factionalism and that no harm has been done thereby, either to the art, its exponents nor their admirers. It ensures that all parties become more widely known, and is probably good for business! It is soon forgotten and no doubt, in this instance, will have been so long before this is in print.

Which set of dancers one preferred had less to do with the merit of those dancers than with the temperament and character of the person watching them; and, where the pedigree of the dance and of the dancers was called in question, let it be stated categorically, here and now, that to say that a dance performed by a full-blooded Spaniard must be more correctly "Spanish" than one performed by a person with one or less Spanish parents is just about as reasonable and logical as to say that a dance performed by the offspring of two ballet dancers must be twice as balletic as a dance performed by the child of one ballet dancer—and, presumably, four times as balletic as one performed by the child of total abstainers from ballet!

Contrary to a widespread belief, all Spaniards do *not* dance "by instinct", nor need all exponents of Spanish dancing be Spaniards, although to have lived there may very well have some advantages.

Of the dancers which this summer brought us, Rosario and Antonio gave a perfect example of the truism that if you perform a movement often enough and fast enough and well enough, everyone will say that you are very clever—and indeed, everyone would be very right! Rosario and Antonio are extremely brilliant technicians and it may be partly for that reason that their dancing seemed to many people to lack something of the warmth and humanity which one has a right to expect from a theatrical performance, or from any other artistic conception. Also, there was a natural tendency on the part of these dancers to do the things they did well so superlatively that the attention of the less wary members of the audience was entirely distracted from the things they did less well. This is a part of showmanship rather than a part of artistry, which would rather concentrate itself upon improving the imperfections. Some of the most beautiful characteristics of Spanish dancing received the least attention from these dancers, notably the "figure-of-eight", the symbol of

ROSARIO AND ANTONIO

Photograph by Paul Wilson





LUIS OLIVARES, NILA
AMPARO AND JOSE GRECO
in 'LA PETENERA'

Photograph by
Lindequist,
Copenhagen

eternity, which is so integral a part of this type of dancing, and which has so many uses, possibilities and significances of technical as well as spiritual importance that it would not be exaggerated to compare it in importance to the "turn-out" and the "pull-up" of classical ballet; for no technique may be dismissed with the word "mere" when it decides, as it must, the style and therefore the spirit of the dance.

The impression left by the dancing of Antonio is rather that he is a magnificent dancer than that he is a magnificent *Spanish* dancer; and those who think that this is to his credit have a right to their opinion and the appearance of no little logic on their side—but, since when has the appreciation of art been only a matter for cold logic?

Rosario is a gifted dancer also, and projects a pleasing personality. She allows herself to be overshadowed by her partner, which may be artistically correct as so many of their dances are from the south of Spain, but in other respects is a pity.

It was a pity, too, that the programme note to the final dance of *Café de Chinitas* described Lorca's verse as "nonsensical". In Andalusia, as in many other parts of the world, parsley is the symbol of sexual virility and lettuce the symbol of the subsequent cooling of passion. This was, to a certain degree, indicated in the dance, but not at all in the programme.

The person or persons responsible for the brief raising of the house lights between the items deserves

gratitude. Facilities for reading the programme are welcome at any recital performance, and this device should become a universal one on such occasions.

At Sadler's Wells the attractive programme, with José Greco's portrait on the cover, was a good prelude to some outstanding performances. Although Greco made a modest minimum of personal appearances, his artistic direction is obvious throughout and his company are truly representative of the spirit of Spanish dancing, as one would expect of one chosen by the Spanish Government as "artistic ambassadors."

It has caused some surprise that Greco himself plays the castanets less often (although by no means less well) than most Spanish dancers. In fact, to perform these dances without castanets is much more difficult than it is with them; for their presence precludes the possibility of executing the difficult hand movement which are otherwise obligatory! Greco performs these to perfection, and his *pitos* (finger-snapping) is quite extraordinarily skilful.

Greco relies not upon repetition but upon variety for his *zapateado*, or footwork, and he, his partner Nila Amparo who is also his wife, and in fact the whole Company, extract the fullest possibilities from the figures-of-eight and other traditional patterns and display extremely decorative groupings in all the *ensemble* dances.

Two dancers specialising in the gypsy dances are brother and sister Teresa and Juanele Mayo. Teresa has a finely concentrated technique and an expressive and *gamine*-like personality, while her brother Juan-



Markova and Dolin opened the "Two Hundred Years of Humorous Art" Exhibition at Gorrings, on June 18th. Markova, seen in the above picture, bought "Monstrosities of 1827" by Robert Cruikshank. Anton Dolin bought two pictures by Matthew Darly, "A Macaroni in Morning Dress in the Park" and "Female Macaroni", both first published in 1772.

ele, correctly austere as to face, gives expression to the most dynamic energy from the waist downwards. When his footwork has become a little tidier and more precise, he may become one of the foremost dancers of his type.

By special collaboration, Greco was able to present La Quica, one of the most famous teachers in Spain. Both in personality and in artistic technique, this lady demonstrated how well-deserved is her reputation, and her dancing will not soon be forgotten by connoisseurs.

One of the most expressive castanet players in the company was Carole Goya who also danced, with Greco, a charming Bolero. The Bolero, child of both ballet and Spanish dancing, has been adopted by the latter and is, comparatively speaking, a modern addition to this ancient art. Nevertheless, it is already old enough to have acquired different "periods" and, while Antonio and Rosario favoured, and delightfully performed, the later and more spectacular

Bolero with its high elevation, Goya and Greco danced the original and slightly simpler, although no less charming, version.

Lovers of Spanish arts may well have felt that, with such a wealth of Spanish music to draw upon (some of which would have been new to English audiences), it was a pity that Greco followed earlier leads in using the "pseudo-Spanish" music of Ravel and Rimsky-Korsakov, while the attempt at a potted version of Bizet's *Carmen* was something of a disaster; but much native music was used, and memorably played by Roger Machedo, an outstanding pianist, and Rogelio Reguera, an expert guitarist. Chico de Madrid, a fine flamenco singer, and some of the dancers also, interpreted the vocal aspect of the music.

Reminiscent dance lovers, looking forward hopefully to another visit from this company, will delight in remembering José Greco's *Miller's Dance*, *Pictures from Goya*, the exciting *El Rincon Flamenco*, Nila Amparo in *La Petenera*, and *En El Cortijo*, with its impression of wild, yet controlled, horses galloping over the Spanish plains.

Mademoiselle Thérèse Aubert of 6 Rue Houdart de Lamotte, Paris 15, would like to correspond with readers of *Ballet Today* who are interested in Music, Ballet and the arts generally.

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